

for this book by Sara-Jean Richards and Ann Altman.

The material presented in *Observations by Early Visitors* allows the reader a remarkable opportunity to compare different observations made over more than a half of a century, offering an enhanced view on the communication between islanders and the crews of visiting ships. In the majority of the sources, the natives are described as a friendly people offering food and artefacts for trade; some of these early collected masterpieces of Easter Island art make it possible to trace even non-documented visits. The situation changed, however, following several sad events when islanders were mistreated or killed; further visitors were usually prevented from landing by a shower of stones. And yet, the disposition of the natives varied, so that ships arriving within the same year might obtain completely contrasting welcomes; it's possible the situation was influenced by conditions on the island itself, such as the quality of harvest, the state of internal peace or warfare, etc.

Numerous accounts mention well-developed plantations, which is especially important to appreciate the agricultural history of the island, as practically all the visiting ships successfully acquired provisions. In some cases, food brought for trading was evidently so abundant that, after the crew declined to buy any more, the islanders cheerfully threw the remaining food overboard before leaving the ship (Hugh Cuming's account, 1827). Thus, the early 19th century records suggest that the islanders had plenty of food, which perfectly agrees with the results of the modern archaeological research revealing strong modification of Rapa Nui terrain for agricultural needs (discussed in detail in a new book by Christopher Stevenson and Sonia Haoa, *Prehistoric Rapa Nui: Landscape and Settlement Archaeology at Hanga Ho'onu*; Easter Island Foundation, 2008). Therefore, despite complicated issues pertaining to deforestation of the island, the natives managed at least for a while to find successful solutions for producing food in quantities sufficient to maintain themselves and to trade provisions with passing ships.

Observations by Early Visitors also features many curious details, such as description of a special ceremony for handing over a wooden carving, turban-like headgear worn by the natives, and aspects of body adornment (e.g., tattooing and body painting). The account of Charles Bishop, captain of the *Ruby* (1795), contains several Rapanui words, including recognizable *new'ee* (nui) for "big", *ear'nee* (ariki) for "chief", and *mo'aee* (moai) — the latter translated to mean "to lie down to sleep"! From the ship *Venus* in 1838 Abel Aubert du Petit-Thouars describes an *ahu* with "four equally spaced red statues, whose tops were covered in white stones", located on the west coast before reaching Cook's Bay.

The book features more than 30 illustrations, including historical paintings and lithographs of early voyages (Cook, La Pérouse, Bishop, Kotzebue, du Petit-Thouars, and Pinart), as well as a map of the island showing territorial boundaries as depicted by Routledge. Two dozen photographs illustrate various Rapa Nui artefacts, such as stone and wood sculptures, adornments like *tahonga* and *reimiro*, fishhooks, and painted bark cloth figurines from collections in various museums.

There is an extensive bibliography, and an appendix listing whaling ships that visited the island between 1840 and 1855 (with references to institutions where the corresponding logbooks or journals are located); this should be of special interest to readers looking for the full sources of the early accounts about Rapa Nui.

Observations by Early Visitors is an attractive book featuring many historical records, interesting discussions, and numerous illustrations — and it contains a lot of important information about the people of Easter Island and their unique culture.

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WHERE FATE BECKONS. THE LIFE OF JEAN-FRANÇOIS DE LA PÉROUSE

John Dunmore

University of Alaska Press, 2007
Soft cover, ISBN 978-1-602230-03-3
\$19.71 from Amazon.com

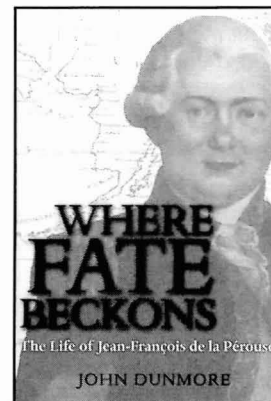
Review by Georgia Lee

Any student or *aficionado* of Easter Island knows the name of La Pérouse, who landed there in 1786; a prominent bay on the island's north coast is named for him. Their stop at Rapa Nui was short, less than one day, but La Pérouse left behind seeds and animals (goats, pigs, and sheep), maize and other cereals. None were ever seen again.

The *Astrolabe* and *Boussole* sailed toward the Hawaiian Islands, and from there to the Alaskan coast, to California, and then outward into the Eastern Pacific Ocean. Finally they reached Australia and anchored in Botany Bay. A British ship, *Sirius*, agreed to carry letters and reports back to Europe — a serendipitous event for, otherwise, we would know nothing of the amazing experiences of La Pérouse and his crews. Sailing onward, they disappeared from the face of the earth — lost, it seemed, in a horrific shipwreck.

In 1826, an Irish captain found traces of a wreck that had occurred at Vanikoro, but it is only recently that expeditions were created to search for the wreckage of the two frigates, and to learn the story of how the expedition ended.

La Pérouse was born near Albi, France, educated in a Jesuit college, and fought against the British off the coast of North America during the Seven Years War. He was made a commander for defeating an English frigate and, in 1785, he was appointed by Louis XVI to lead an expedition around the world in order to explore the South Pacific. It is difficult to re-



create a life that happened hundreds of years ago, unless that life involved keeping diaries and the like. So the author, Dunmore, is forced to speculate quite a bit about La Pérouse's early life, what he might have done, or seen, or thought. We learn that the man was "matter of fact" and "competent" and had a "sense of proportion". Sterling qualities all, but it makes for some dull reading. But while the story picks up when the expedition puts out to sea, the sailings are not covered in detail. I would have liked to have learned more about La Pérouse's life, in the broader Pacific context.

A search of Vanikoro that began in 1964 continues, and enough evidence has been found to say with certainty that the graveyard of the La Pérouse expedition has at last been located. Cannonballs, a skeleton in the reef, and various material items have been found, some indicating that at least a few of the crew survived the wrecks. Some think the survivors built a small boat and sailed away. Perhaps — but, if so, there is no record of it. The survivors apparently were in conflict with the local islanders and seemingly ended up in the stockpot. A sad ending to a marvelous adventure!

As for the book itself, I am torn in how to appraise it. I suppose that Dunmore had to scrounge for every last bit of information he could find, searching for tidbits of La Pérouse's life (and probably, a lot of material was destroyed in the French Revolution). So the author likely did the best with what he had to go with. Am I a better person for having read the book? No. Do I know more about La Pérouse now than I did before? Yes. Would I buy the book? Probably not. Would I read it again? Definitely not. Better to check this out from the library.

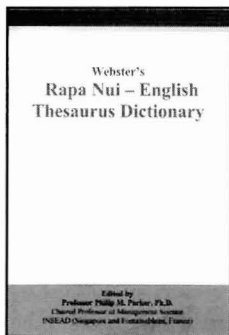
This book is part of the "Lives of Great Explorers" series, with 267 pages plus Notes, Bibliography, and Index.

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WEBSTER'S RAPANUI - ENGLISH THESAURUS DICTIONARY

Philip M. Parker

Icon Publishing, 2008
ISBN 978-0-497836-76-4
\$28.95 from Amazon.com



Review by Shawn McLaughlin

As a companion to *Webster's English to Rapa Nui Crossword Puzzles* (by Philip M. Parker, Icon Publishing, 2005), there's a new reference work for Easter Island bibliophiles — *Webster's English to Rapa Nui Thesaurus - Dictionary*. Touted as the first of its kind, this

thesaurus / dictionary is a unique and valuable addition to the reference section of any Rapanuiphile's bookshelf, although with the otherwise indiscriminate incorporation of Chilean / Spanish terms, it might be better to use the word "Pascuense" rather than "Rapa Nui" [*sic*: "Rapanui"]. Nevertheless, this 123-page-long, 6"x9" soft bound book contains a Rapa Nui to English thesaurus, a cross-listing of English subjects to Rapa Nui subjects, a vocabulary study list, and an index. Here's a sample entry for the word *mana* from the Rapa Nui to English Thesaurus:

Power; **synonyms** (n) force, ability, potency, authority, control, energy, agency, domination, intensity, strength, effectiveness, effect, aptitude, capability, command, gift, jurisdiction, mightiness, rule, vigor, weight, mastery, function, efficiency; (v) influence, might, domination, faculty, capacity, efficacy;
antonyms (n) powerlessness, helplessness, weakness

And here are the entries under the letter "O" from the Index of English Subjects to Rapa Nui Subjects:

oar see 'AO / **ocean** see Tai; **ocean current** 'AU / **ocean current** see 'AU / **one** see ETAHI / **onion** see ONIANA / **opt** see 1. ESCOGER; 2. SELECCIONAR; 3. VAC. / **orange** see 1. ANANI; 2. URE OMO / **oregano** see OREKANO / **orgasm** see REKE REKA / **out** see 1. 'A MU'a; 2. 'I HAHO; **wash out** / TATA; **pour out** PIPĪ / **outstanding** see HAKAIRI / **oven** see RONA / **over** see HAKA'OTI / **overcast** see MOTIHOR / **overcoat** see PARATOA / **ownership** see TAO'A / **ox** see 'UCI

The vocabulary lists provide verbs and nouns from Rapanui to English and English to Rapanui. For verb examples, there are **haka matakū** for "frighten" or **tautora** for "suffer" and **read** for "tai'o" or **medicate** for "taute". For noun examples, there are **hia hia** for "handsaw" or **inanga** for "chest" and **abdomen** for "manava" or **meat** for "kiko".

There are 57 pages to the thesaurus proper and 67 pages to the index — an altogether not insubstantial assortment for what is otherwise a fairly compact little book.

Together with the more classic works by Fuentes (*Dictionary & Grammar of the Easter Island Language* - Editorial Andres Bello, 1960) and Churchill (*Easter Island: The Rapanui Speech and the Peopling of Southeast Polynesia* - Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1912); and recent works such as Sallés, *et al.* (*Rapa Nui Lengua y Cultura: Diccionario Ilustrado: Rapa Nui - Pehuén*, 2006) and even Pauly (*Ara o te Vanana / Kohau Kimi Rave'a* [Phrasebook / Dictionary] - Comercial 3G S.A., 2008), this thesaurus / dictionary provides not just another Easter Island linguistic resource but, because of the inclusion of Spanish terms, it represents an opportunity to evaluate the evolution of language spoken on the island and by extension the evolution of the island's culture.

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